

Keeping Secrets, Keeping Safe by orphan_account

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Summary:

Max and El are keeping something from each other. Something important.

1. Soda and Skateboards

Will Byers was the sweetest boy I knew. Somehow he could sense the troubles of others. Like when Dustin's grandmother passed away, Dustin didn't even have to say anything and Will just knew. If I hadn't known any better, I'd say he had a superpower for sensing emotions.

12:04am I ran away from home. I skated as fast as I could with my bag slung over my shoulder. Neil was drunk again, and I just happened to step a little bit out of line. Needless to say, I did not get out of that house without any injuries. I needed to get somewhere safe. Somewhere I wouldn't be found by him.

Will found me crying my eyes out at the top of the quarry. I was sat on the ground near the edge, legs dangling over, when he sat down next to me. He didn't say anything. He just put his arm around me, and I rested my head on his shoulder. I knew he planned to ask, but I could tell he was waiting for me to stop crying.

Will was the only person I felt like I could trust right now. Lucas became a little distant after our recent break up, and I don't blame him. I needed someone to cry on, someone who would listen. Will was that person for me right now. He's had experiences similar to myself, so he was always the person I wanted to see and the person I trusted whenever I had parent troubles. He spent the first 11 years of his life being raised by an alcoholic, someone who treated him like his interest in art and games was abnormal and sin. He's been called every name under the sun by that man. If anyone knows what I'm going through, it's him.

"Did he find out?" Will finally asked. I lifted my head off his shoulder, nearly hitting his own head.

"No he didn't, thank god. I'd be in the water by now if he had," I replied. I had been sitting there, resting my head on his shoulder for what felt like an hour. It was nice to finally have some conversation. "How did you find me?"

"I saw you skating in front. I assumed you at least wanted some time

alone, so I took my time getting out here. Why did you pick here?" he asked.

"It's where I taught El how to ride a skateboard," I replied. A smile grasped at my lips. Remembering all the times she fell off the board, her determination, and all the jokes we cracked at each other reminded me that there are good things in life. "It's where I met my best friend from Hawkins."

"I thought I was your best friend," Will said with an idiotic grin and a silly voice. I hugged him in closely, trying to avoid falling off the cliff and into the waters below.

"You're both my best friends."

* * * * *

I didn't get much sleep that night. The Byers sofa may be the second most comfortable sleeping place in all of existence, but memories of Neil kept me up. I tried to avoid keeping Will up, and I didn't want to wake up El or Mike. I decided it was better to sacrifice my sleep and performance in school the next day to benefit the others.

After Jonathan made breakfast (which was fantastic, thanks to his recent employment as a chef at the local diner), he drove myself and Will to school. Steve, who all but lived at the Henderson home, showed up with Dustin, Mike, and El. As soon as she got out of the car she sprinted towards me and pulled me into a hug.

"I may have told El about last night," Will said behind me. After El eventually let go, I playfully punched Will in the shoulder.

"Hey, where's Lucas?" I asked.

"Sick," replied Dustin.

"How are you feeling now?" El asked. She must have been worried out of her mind.

"Tired, I didn't sleep well last night." I rubbed the back of my head, and pulled her into another hug. El's hugs were always the best. Any time I wasn't feeling at the top of my game, I almost always got a hug from El. They were grounding. They made me feel better 100% of the time.

After school, the arcade was our go to place. We always hung out there, around there, etc. It was a haven for peace. No parents flooding our lives, no school problems, just a loud room of games, toys, prize machines, and Dragon's Lair. But for some reason, today I just wasn't feeling it.

"Hey El, do you wanna just hang out around back? I've got a headache," I asked, "I'll let you use my board to practice some skateboard tricks."

"Oh, uh..." she glanced over at the other guys, who all, without looking away from the machine, showed their signs of approval. "Sure."

"Alright. I'll meet you out back, I'm just gonna grab some coke. You want some?" I said.

"Sure, thanks," she replied.

* * * * *

I bought two coca cola's and went out back to find her desperately trying to nail some trick she saw on TV. I tossed her one of the cans, and sat down against the wall facing her. I cracked open the can and put my mouth over the top to avoid the overflow of carbonated fizz. El did the same.

"I don't know why you even want to learn all the crazy tricks? I only really know how to ollie because I use it for transport," I said. She looked down at me and scowled.

"Because it's cool, and it's satisfying when you pull it off," she

replied.

“Sure, and you’re totally not trying to impress someone with it,” I joked, taking a sip of my drink. We spent the next few hours ranting to each other about the silly things that happened at school, dramatizing the tiny things such as how Bobby cut in line at lunch or Thomas stole my pencil or something. Faux gossipy rant mixed in with actual gossipy rant about stuff, all the while El attempted different tricks on her skateboard. It was nice, bonding over cola and skateboards.

El eventually kicked the skateboard up and leaned it against the wall before sitting down next to me.

“Giving up?” I said, playfully.

“Nah, just worn out,” she said. “So, what actually happened last night? Will only told me he found you crying at the quarry.”

“Shithead dad came home drunk last night and hit me,” I replied. I could feel my blood start to boil.

“Oh, gross. Over what?” she asked.

“I missed a spot on a dish.”

“Honestly that doesn’t surprise me. Your dad is a total tool,” she said. We both laughed. I leaned my head on her shoulder. She moved her drink into her right hand as to not hit me in the face when she lifted up her arm to take a sip.

“Have I told you Mike and I broke up?” she asked me. I choked on my drink, before lifting my head up to look at her, confusedly.

“Seriously? Why?” I asked, completely stunned.

“You wouldn’t believe me if I told you,” she said, sipping the remainder of her drink.

“Try me.”

“He says he doesn’t like me in a relationship way, and that he likes

someone else. When I asked who, he said he couldn't tell me," she said.

"Oh, I see. That doesn't seem unrealistic, are you guys still friends?" I asked.

"Yeah, that ain't ending anytime soon. I just feel bad for him," she said.

"Why's that?"

"Well if he likes someone and he can't tell me who, it must be someone he's not allowed to like. You know, probably a boy."

"Ah I see," I returned.

"Yeah. I can kinda understand, though," she mumbled.

"Pardon?"

"What? Oh, nothing. It's nothing," she said.

"Alright then..." I murmured to myself.

"Yep," she said. She blindly tossed her empty can into the nearby trash-can, missing miserably.

"Dude, that throw was awful!" I yelled.

"Oh shut up, you do better!" she replied.

After throwing cans around for a bit, we eventually sat back down. I rested my head back on her shoulder, almost falling asleep until I heard the beep beep of Steve's car. It didn't take long for us all to pile in. Will was picked up about fifteen minutes before he got to the arcade, so there was actually enough space.

"Alright Max, where am I dropping you off?" Steve said from the front. I looked over at El.

"Is it alright if I stay at your place for a bit?" I whispered to her, waiting for her nod. "Just take me to El's place."

“Alrighty, let’s go.”

2. Sleepovers and Cuddles (Revised)

El's place was something out of a dream. She lived out in the woods, so there was never any loud neighbors and you could party as much as you wanted. El enjoyed the peace and quiet, so she never threw any parties. Occasionally she would host and sometimes GM D&D for Mike when he got sick, or she wanted to practice GMing, but aside from that nobody ever came around.

She was adopted about a year ago by Chief Hopper, after she had her parents arrested for child neglect and abuse. She ended up in foster care for a year, so nobody saw her for a long time, but she's back now and everything is good.

Thank god for that one.

We ended up playing video games for most of the evening. El had managed to get her hands on an NES as well as a cabinet for Dig Dug and Pac-Man (which El had managed to get the high score on both). When Hopper came home, he didn't ask many questions about why I was here. I assume El called him to say that I'd be staying the night, because I had nowhere else to go.

After our surprisingly-not-eggos dinner, we had to get ready for bed. It was 10:30, and even though we didn't have school, Hopper had a job, so he needed to sleep. Which means we need to go to bed, or at least go into the bedroom.

After about an hour of telling shitty jokes and laughing our asses off, Hopper came upstairs and knocked on the door.

"Alright guys, it's 11:30, so you need to get to sleep. That or quiet down. I'm right under you so I can hear you," he said through the door.

"Alright!" we both yelled through the door. I went downstairs to quickly grab my bag, and brought it back up and began rummaging through it to find some pyjamas.

"Flashlight, supercomm, science textbook, math textbook, Cap'n

Buns, fuck,” I whispered to myself.

“What’s wrong?” She asked.

“I don’t have any pyjamas.”

“Oh, umm... I don’t know what I can do for you,” she said.

“I usually just sleep in my underwear and a shirt, is that alright?” I asked.

“Oh, yeah, totally,” she said, pausing between each word.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure.” She said.

“Alright then, let’s get ready for bed before this gets weird. Mind if I borrow a shirt?”

“Yeah, go for it.”

I walked over to her closet and pulled out a baggy grey shirt, and began to get changed. I took off my jeans and shirt and tossed them over to my bag, and I put on El’s loaned shirt. As I finished getting changed, I turned around to see El with her own back turned, wearing a pair of long blue pyjama shorts, and a pink bra. She was struggling with a matching blue t-shirt made of a soft fabric.

“Son of a bitch, why won’t this just go down?” I heard her whisper to herself. She had the shirt over her head, blinding her from the outside world.

“Lemme help you with that,” I announced, as to not scare her. I grabbed the shirt, and she extended her arms through the sleeves as much as possible. With a single tug, I pulled she shirt down over her head.

“Thanks,” she said. She began to blush again. Her deep brown eyes met my own. A single tuft of brown hair descended in her face as the rest of her curly hair was spewed out in all directions. Her pink lips formed a nervous smile. She was beautiful.

Oh god she was beautiful.

After a short pillow fight that Hopper had to stop, I went downstairs to steal a few couch cushions so I had somewhere to sleep. I assumed Hopper had gone to bed at this point, so I had to be quiet. I brought a flashlight so I could see, but that wouldn't be necessary as the lights flicked on and I turned around to see Hopper behind me, coffee in hand.

"You do know there's a bed in her room, right?" he said.

"Yeah, but she's sleeping in it. One of us would have had to come down here regardless and I'd rather it be me," I replied. Maybe I piled on a bit too much snarkiness.

"I'm sure she'd have no objections sharing the bed with you, but y'know. To each their own, I suppose."

"Is that really how you use that phrase?" I asked. He simply nodded. "Hm, alright then," I added.

I grabbed a roll-out pseudo mattress that was pointed out to me in the corner of the room, and took it upstairs before I came back down for a pillow and blanket.

"Goodnight chief," I said.

"Sleep well, deputy." Hop, El, and myself all had little nicknames based on army ranks. Hopper was chief, El was captain, and I was deputy. I don't exactly remember how they came about, but it added a little flair to our relationship.

"One more thing, there kiddo." I swung around, "How many?"

I was confused. "How many what?" I asked.

"Bruises."

I never told him about Niel's psychotic abuse sessions whenever he gets drunk. For all he should know, I live a perfectly normal life with a less than amazing father who doesn't beat his children but is just kinda trashy. "How'd you know?"

“I know what makeup looks like, believe me. I used to get in fights in highschool and I’d use my at-the-time girlfriend’s makeup to cover it up. But that was only ever my face. Why are there bruises on your arm as well?”

“I don’t want to talk about it right now. Sorry, chief. Goodnight.”

I went back upstairs and set myself up on the mattress before I inevitably spent the night tossing and turning because Niel doesn’t just invade my real life. Such is the life of the abused, I told myself. This is every night now, get used to it.

The only time I’ll ever say this, but thank god for consistency, and especially for El.

“Hey, you okay?” I woke up to El’s concerned look peering down on me. I was covered in sweat and my blanket was practically sideways.

“Yeah, just a nightmare I guess.” I couldn’t even remember what I was dreaming about, I only know it was bad.

“Here, climb in bed with me, I’ll make sure whatever is tormenting your dreams leaves you alone.” She offered. I would have declined, but she was back in bed before I could even register what was happening. Looks like this was happening.

She rested on her side facing me as I crawled into the sheets, facing her. She flipped off the light and I put my head against the pillow. I could feel her arm snake around me and pull me closer to her, holding me tightly like she never wanted to ever let go. She was so comfortable and warm, and I was so glad this was happening. My head moved to her chest, and her free arm pulled me even closer, and we just fell asleep like this. Me resting in her arms. I feared for the time when I would have to leave this position.

She was perfect. I didn’t want to leave this moment ever.

3. Emotions and Feelings

6:34am. I woke up bleeding. How's that for a wake up call? "Hey El can I borrow a tampon? Also sorry about the fact that there's blood on your bed. Great first sleepover, I know." How she would love that. I got up quickly, and she woke up just after I moved. Getting a better glance at the bed I can say that thankfully, somehow, none of the bed looked like a murder scene. Goddamn sorcery if I've ever seen it.

"Hey Max, what happened?" El asked, droopy-eyed.

"Period hit, do you have any tampons?" I replied, significantly more awake than her.

"Yeah, top drawer of the shelf behind you under the underwear," she replied. I dug through the drawer and ran off to the bathroom to... do the thing I guess. I dunno what to call it. I quickly returned to the room after cleaning myself up.

"All good? Cuz it's like... super early, and I wanted to sleep in," El groaned.

"Yep, all good."

"Good, now get back over here," She returned, flipping the blanket back. I climbed back in and returned to the place I woke in.

El was so compassionate and kind. Whenever she was around anyone she made them feel welcome and loved to the best of her ability. She was also still a badass who would physically fight any dickhead who threatened anyone she cared about, and she would look good doing it. Her wardrobe ranged from leather jackets and black ripped jeans to high-waisted jeans and a flannel.

I can't explain why this makes me feel so good. I'm cuddling with my best friend and I feel so comfortable and safe. I often snuggled with Lucas but it didn't feel the same as this.

What's different about her?

I managed to get back to sleep relatively quickly, and before I knew it, it was midday. We both woke up at almost the same time, and our eyes met quickly. There was a moment of silence before one of us spoke.

“Hey,” she said, softly. “How’d you sleep?”

“I slept alright, I guess,” I replied, less softly, “How about you?”

My heart was pumping a thousand times a second, and I couldn’t figure out why. What was there to be nervous about? Or anxious or scared? The only thing to be nervous about was-

“I slept quite well. Having you next to me certainly helped.” She got out of bed, and I decided not to interject. I regret making that choice, as now I feel at loss without her next to me. I must have made a sound of upset, because she turned around and smiled at me. She changed into a different shirt and went downstairs.

“I’m gonna make some breakfast, what do you want?” she asked.

“What are my options?” I returned. Typically I just have toast because it’s easy to make and I can take it out of the house with me so I don’t have to worry about too much in the morning and I can get out quickly before chaos reigns with my dad. “Actually, surprise me. But not eggos. If you make waffles use a real waffle iron.”

“Ugh, fine. I wasn’t going to make eggos anyways but whatever.” She rushed downstairs, and I sat in bed pondering everything that had happened. Sleeping with her next to me made me feel so safe and sound, her arms around me were so comforting. I dreamt of nothing while I slept. It was as if she had cast herself into my dreams and beckoned the nightmares away. It wasn’t just the dreams though, even when I was awake, I just felt... happier. Having her there made me feel real joy and comfort for the first time in a very long time. Just her presence has lifted me up in ways. Seeing her smile after someone cracks a joke, hearing her sing in the change rooms when

she thinks she's alone, the way she covers her face after someone makes a dirty joke, and more. Now that I think of it, she isn't trying to make someone happy with these things. They're just... adorable. Her bright smile, her deep brown eyes, her gorgeous hair. She herself was adorable. *Is* adorable.

Is this what love feels like?

I shook my head, attempting to dismiss the thoughts. I can't be in love with her, she's a girl. Girls can't love girls.

Right?

* * * * *

I decided now would be a good time to actually get out of bed. I went downstairs and was immediately reintroduced to the kind aroma of eggs, pancakes, and various fruit.

"I seriously thought you were just going to stick eggos in a toaster and..." I rounded the corner into the kitchen and saw her at the stove. She was beautiful. Her hair was perfectly messy and wild, and the baggy t-shirt she was wearing perfectly captured the stereotypical apartment fantasy where the guy walks into the kitchen to see the most beautiful girl in his life cooking breakfast, walking up behind her and hugging her while she continued cooking. It's safe to say I was very tempted to follow suit with the role I filled. It took a lot of willpower not to hug her. I was still awestruck nonetheless.

El turned around to face me as she heard me come in. "Hey, I didn't think you would be... *wow*."

"What?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing," she said, shaking her head. "Can you grab some plates? They're in the cupboard above the coffee maker."

"Oh, yeah." I quickly grabbed two plates, making careful not to bump

El while she was cooking. I placed them on the counter beside the stove.

“Thank you. There’s also orange juice in the fridge if you want some,” she chirped. I decided against that, and grabbed a mug out of the cupboard and poured myself some coffee before grabbing my food and El in front of the TV to play some NES. She was inserting her copy of Legend of Zelda.

“I can’t seem to find Level 6, do you have any idea of where it is?” She said as I sat down.

“I think it’s out by the graveyard, all the way to the west,” I said taking a sip from my coffee.

We spent most of the day playing games and watching movies. It was just like other sleepovers you’d hear about from other kids at school. It didn’t stray from being the most fun I’ve had in a long time. But somehow, while we were watching Return of the Jedi, it managed to top itself.

“Okay but can we just agree that Carrie Fisher is one of the most beautiful people alive?” El asked me.

“I don’t know, man. Claudia Wells is up there,” I argued.

“Who is she again?” El asked, pausing the movie to face me.

“She played Jennifer in Back To The Future,” I answered.

“Oh right! Yeah she’s really pretty as well.”

“Not as pretty as you though,” I stated.

“What was that?” She questioned.

“What? Nothing...”

“Did you call me pretty?” El asked.

“No!” Yes.

“Don’t worry,” she took my hand in her own.

“I think you’re really pretty too.”

4. Phantoms and Fruition

Notes for the Chapter:

WARNING: It get's kinda steamy and nsfw. There's no smut, but shirts come off and yeah. Be warned.

You shouldn't even be reading lesbian fic at work anyways.

Also this is the last part.

After we spent a solid hour blushing and also in silence, it was time for me to pack up and head home.

“I wish you could stay longer,” El whined. This was presumably her first real sleepover, as well as my own. It was going great, and this was easily the worst part of the experience.

“I wish I could stay longer too, but I have to head home. I’m sorry,” I said softly.

El hugged me, before I turned and put on my headphones, pressing play on my walkman.

It didn’t take long rudely greeted by a high-pitched version of The Cure, and I turned around and welcomed myself back into El’s home.

“Did you forget something?” El asked, slightly confused. I handed her the headphones and pressed play, allowing her to listen to Robert Smith on helium. “Oh, my walkman has been doing that for a while. I don’t know how to fix it.”

“Lucky for you, there’s an expert in your abode. Get your walkman and meet me in the kitchen.” El turned on her heel and went upstairs to grab her own cassette player. I went into the bathroom, looking for rubbing alcohol and a few Q-Tips.

“What do we need those for?” El questioned, seeing me rummaging through cupboards and pulling out the necessities. I signalled to follow, and we both went into the kitchen.

“Chances are, parts of your walkman are dirty. Here, lemme see,” I

said. El handed me the walkman, and the cleaning process began. I poured the rubbing alcohol into the cap of the bottle, and dipped a Q-Tip into the liquid.

“Rubbing Alcohol is the key to cleaning electronics, as it doesn’t conduct electricity as well as water. At least, that’s what my dad taught me.” El looked on in awe, as I performed what she thought was an incredible feat. “First, you rub this part with the Q-Tip,” I said, applying the Q-Tip to the reader. “Then you rub these two parts, just in case, and you should be good to go.” I quickly repeated the steps on my own player, before plugging one of my tapes into both and putting on the headphones. A pleased look stretched across El’s face, as she listened to the results.

“Woah, it sounds normal now!” El exclaimed.

“Just a little trick I’ve picked up, remember that one.” El nodded firmly. “Welp, I gotta go. I’ll miss you.”

El pulled me into another hug. “I’ll miss you too.”

I honestly didn’t want to let go, partially because the hug was the last bit of comfort I would have before diving back into the mouth of the devil, but also because my face was redder than a cherry, blushing furiously. And I didn’t want to let El see that. Eventually, though, El pulled away, leaving me no choice but to back away as well.

“See you later, Max,” El let out.

“Will do, El,” I replied somberly.

* * * * *

I let myself back into this small home. Neil was sat on the couch, with the front door perfectly in his view. Neither of us said anything as I stalked to my room, flopping down on the bed.

I transferred the cassette from my walkman to my boombox sitting on my desk, and locked the door. Neil would probably barge in and tell me to turn it off, regardless of what I was doing, and I did not want that.

I pretty much spent the afternoon lying on my face while listening to music. Hell, I didn't even notice the music stop. I was a lifeless lump wasting away while I processed everything that happened over the last however long.

I could still feel the ghost of her arms on my neck and shoulders, the indents of her back on my palms, her chest pressed up against mine from before I left. Her embrace still danced on my skin like hot water, her smell still poisoned my nose with lavender. Her arm was still wrapped around me like the night before, her legs tangled in mine. I... I miss it.

The image of her cooking breakfast from this morning welcomed itself into my mind, with her perfectly messy hair and her baggy t-shirt. The way the light hit her face when she turned around. I pressed my face harder into the pillow to hide my blushing from the nobody in my room. Her words echoed in my mind.

"Hey, I didn't think you would be... wow."

Her eyes lit up when she had said that, hours ago. Was that 'wow' at me? It couldn't have been. She's not into me, there's no way. Girls can't love girls.

"Don't worry, I think you're really pretty too."

Can they?

In less than a second I found myself halfway to her house in the forest, with only one thing on my mind: *Her*. I needed to see her, for whatever reason. I don't even remember anything before this moment, all I knew is I needed to see her.

I could still feel her on my arms and chest, but now there was something new. A touch, gracing my lips. Normally I would try to ignore it, but right now wasn't normal.

I sprinted through the woods, almost dropping my skateboard a few times, before I saw her house. She was in the window, just glancing out. The way she was glancing out into space, looked as if she was sitting there waiting for me. Time slowed as we briefly made eye-contact, and I could see a smile creep up her face.

I dropped my skateboard as time resumed. I went up the steps one after the other, almost tripping multiple times. My lungs were burning, my legs aching. Her door opened and she pulled me inside, quickly closing it behind me.

There she was.

I took off my shoes and coat, and hung it up, taking the opportunity.

“Sorry I came without calling, I just really needed to-”

Her lips were suddenly on mine, her hands on my cheeks as if I was going to float away. My arms moved of their own accord, wrapping around her waist, and gripping her hair to pull her as close to me as physically possible. Her hands moved around my neck, gripping me tightly. Neither of us wanted to lose the other.

She pulled away, smiling. Her eyes locked with mine, and the fog in my mind had cleared. She pulled me upstairs, into her bedroom. Her foot shut the door as she kissed me again. The edge of the bed reached the inside of my knees and I sat, and she rushed around to the other side. We both crawled under the blankets. I reached for her and pulled her into another kiss, and she climbed on top of me, sitting on my lap as I lay on my back. Her soft fingers caressed my cheek as I gripped her hair, pulling her closer. Her lips left mine, and she kissed her way down to my neck. Her lips pressed hard, her teeth biting down on my flesh.

“E-El-” My breathing was heavy, as she successfully siphoned moans from the back of my throat. She pulled away from my neck after a minute or so.

“There,” she said, looking at the mark on my neck, “now you’re

mine.”

“That’s not eerily possessive,” I joked. She giggled lightly, and I cut her off by pulling her into another kiss.

She pulled away again rather quickly and sat up. The brunette above me gripped the hems of her shirt and pulled them upward, removing the shirt entirely. I followed suit as soon as I realized what was happening. I glanced at the pink lacy bra she was wearing, as she judged mine.

“Did you not have anything cuter?” She whispered.

“It’s comfortable, and I didn’t really prepare for... *this*,” I retorted, mock offended.

“What, are you saying you don’t like this?”

I smirked. “I very much like this,” I whispered in as seductive a tone I could muster. She caught on, and pressed back up against me.

Girls *can* love girls.

* * * * *

Time passed. We lie side by side in El’s not-very-small bed. I rolled myself onto my side to face her.

“That was...” I trailed off, trying to think of the word I was looking for.

“Amazing?” She suggested.

“I was thinking more along the lines of ‘Pretty gay’,” I said. She looked at me puzzled. “What, you think after that I’m gonna be straight? After that? No boy will ever be able to live up to that.”

She smiled at me. “I hope I didn’t rush things.”

“Honestly? Maybe a little, but based on the stress in my life, I needed that,” I confirmed.

Silence fell between us for a few seconds, but those seconds felt like an eternity. We both had the same question on our mind, it was only a matter of who was going to ask it first.

“So what’s gonna happen between us?” she finally asked.

“Honestly, I don’t know. I don’t want things to be weird between us or anything.” I said.

“Well, do you think we could be...” she trailed off.

“Friends with benefits?” I suggested. We both laughed.

“No, I was thinking we could be girlfriends.” She offered.

“I would like that, El.” I said. She smiled.

“Then let it be true,” she said.

She kissed me one last time, but this kiss wasn’t lustful or needy. This was love-filled and generous, soft and elegant.

“I love you,” she whispered.

“I love you too.”